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# Personal digital legacy: findings from an exploratory study among citizens of Croatia

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**Z** Odjel za  
informacijske  
znanosti

*Čuvamo i dijelimo znanje*

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# Contents

- Introduction
- Theoretical background
- Terminology
- Exploratory study
  - The aim of the research
  - Research questions
  - Results and discussion
  - Conclusions



# Introduction

- Increased everyday usage and digital content creation
- digital assets can become part of digital legacy
- organized and stored as a personal collection for the future use or as part of future digital heritage
- exploratory study conducted in Croatia in 2022 as a part of the master thesis titled *Organization and preservation of personal digital legacy*, defended at the University of Zadar (Grgeč, 2022)

# Theoretical background and terminology

- an individual possesses two identities: a real-world identity confirmed by official paper documentation and a digital identity created by using the Internet (Park, 2017)
- paper is focused on user's experience and habits in organization and preservation of personal digital legacy
- concept of personal **information management (PIM)** from archival sciences
- PIM supports everyday actions to acquire, organize, maintain and retrieve information for everyday use (Jones et al., 2006)
- **digital footprint** represents an individual's online presence, provides evidence of their digital and physical identity and records the data left by their interaction in a digital environment (Fish, 2009)

# Terminology

## Digital property inventory: categories

- Email
- Social networks
- Communication Apps
- Cloud storage
- Online shopping accounts
- Payment and money management
- Ticketing
- Health and fitness Apps
- Business and networking
- Academic interfaces and educational platforms
- Travel accounts
- Transportation
- Software licences
- Entertainment and streaming accounts
- Productivity services
- Loyalty programs and membership
- Websites and blogs
- Servers
- Product delivery accounts
- Photos
- Smart house dashboard

- **personal digital collection** functions like an informal personal archive of records containing informal and diverse collections constantly expanding
- **personal digital archives** represent “informal, diverse, and expanding memory collections created or acquired and accumulated and maintained by individuals in the course of their personal lives, and belonging to them, rather than to their institutions or other places of work (Williams, John and Rowland, 2009)
- **digital property = digital assets = personal digital belongings > DIGITAL LEGACY**
- digital archives can be created by anyone, digital assets can be owned by anyone – to ensure accessibility there is a necessity to create **DIGITAL LEGACY PLAN**

# Exploratory study

## **The aim of the research**

- to determine the opinions and attitudes of the participants included in the study about their own personal digital legacy
- to examine in what way and to what extent participants organize their personal digital content for the future

# Exploratory study

## **Research questions**

- a) Are respondents aware of their own personal digital legacy and what are their attitudes/opinions about the subject?
- b) In what way and to what extent the respondents organize and preserve their personal digital legacy?

# Methodology

- the survey

- the online survey with 229 respondents
- analyzed by using means of descriptive statistics
- responses collected in the period from February 25<sup>th</sup> to March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022
- 34 questions: 32 closed-type questions and 2 open-type questions
- questions divided into three parts:
  - A. general information about respondents,
  - B. usage and creation of digital content and
  - C. attitudes/opinions about digital legacy; actions and habits in practice



# Results

## A. general information about respondents

- significantly more female respondents (77.7%) took part in the research, and
- only 2.2% of respondents were over 55 years of age

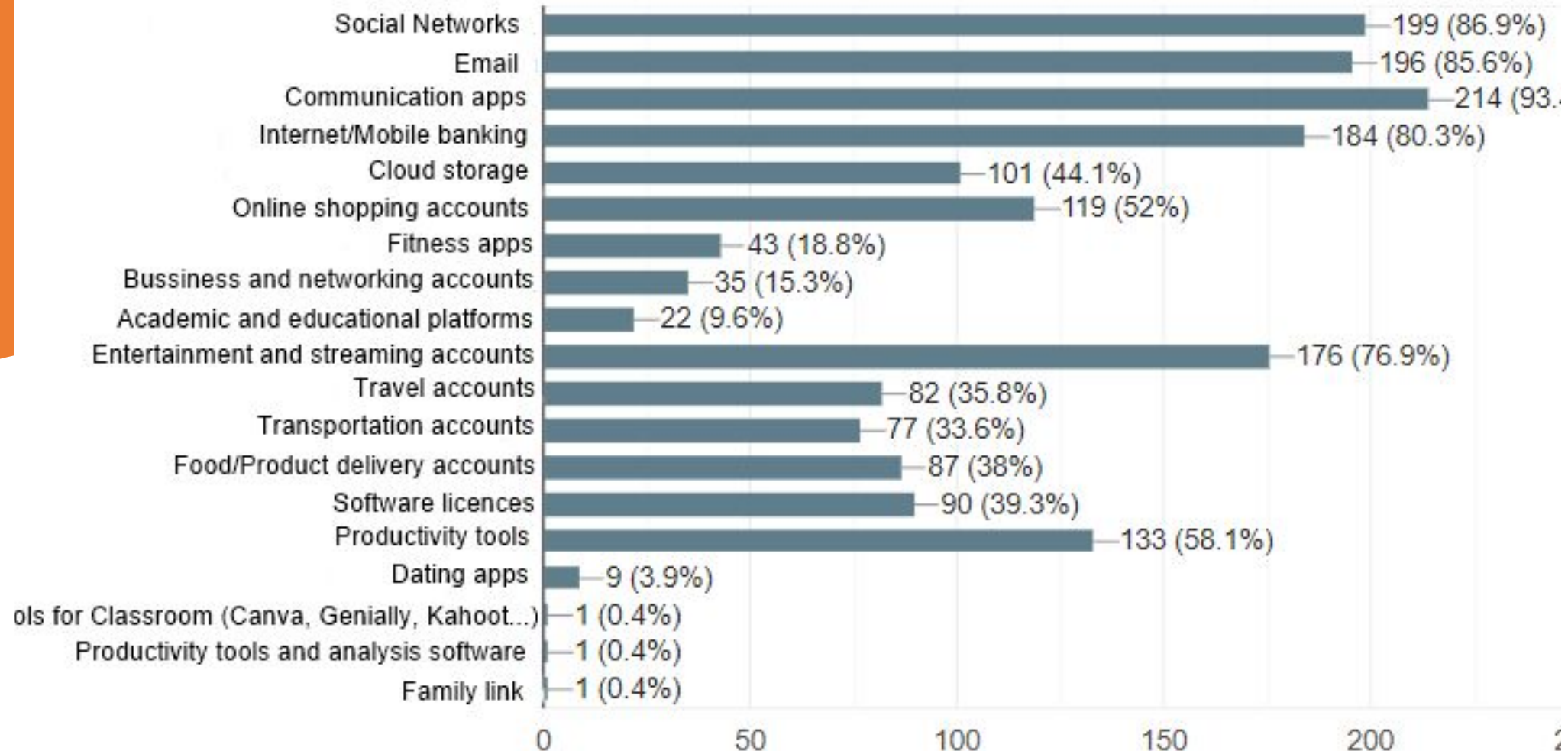
Female	77,7 % (178)
Male	22,3 % (51)

- Out of 229 respondents:
  - 56 (24.5%) - aged between 18 and 25
  - **100 (43.7%) between 26 and 35 // most represented age group**
  - 41 (17.9%) between 36 and 45,
  - 29 (12.7%) between 46 and 55.
  - only 5 (2.2%) were over 55 years old and
  - only 1 over 60 years of age

# Results

## B. usage and creation of digital content

Fig. 1. Online platforms and services actively used in the last 5 years among the respondents



# Results

## B. usage and creation of digital content

Active usage of social networks and communication accounts

### **used few times a day**

- Facebook and Instagram
- e-mail and communication accounts (WhatsApp and Viber)
- the largest amount of content and data is generated on these platforms
- honourable mention: streaming services are often used
- *note: some of the other platforms or services do not require daily use, but are used as needed, such as Internet and mobile banking, e-commerce accounts, travel accounts, transport accounts or product delivery applications.*

# Results

## B. usage and creation of digital content

**Deactivation** of an account on a platform or service (when stopped using)

- **152 respondents (66.4%) never deactivated their user account** on the platform or service they stopped using;
- 74 respondents (32.3%) did deactivate accounts:
  - mostly on social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Tik Tok, Pinterest, LinkedIn, MySpace, MyAnimeList),
  - other platforms or services such as Amazon, Skype, Pedometer and Uber
- 3 respondents (1.3%) did not respond

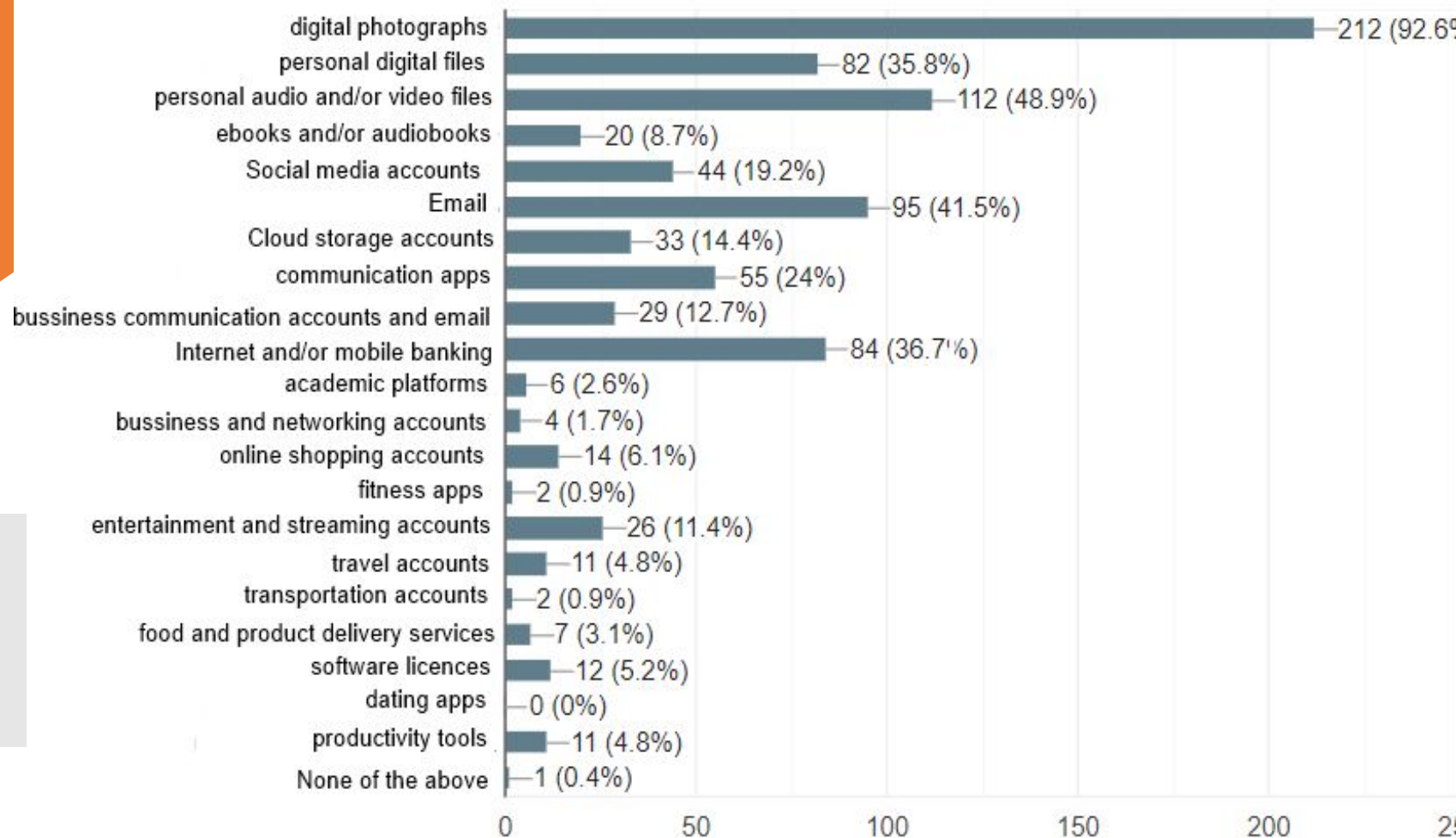
# Results

C. attitudes/opinions about digital legacy; actions and habits in practice

## Top 4 digital content worth saving

1. digital photographs
2. personal audio/video files
3. e-mail
4. Internet banking

Fig. 2. Value of digital files or digital content created: self-assessment



# Results

C. attitudes/opinions about digital legacy; actions and habits in practice

## **Preservation for personal use**

- Internet/mobile banking, communication applications such as WhatsApp and Viber, and e-mail is either important or extremely important to them.
- BUT, most often used apps, e.g. Facebook and Instagram - NOT the content that is extremely important for them to preserve

## **Preservation for the future and heirs**

# Results

C. attitudes/opinions about digital legacy; actions and habits in practice

Table 1. Respondents' opinions on providing the access to personal digital content and platforms to the heirs

DIGITAL CONTENT	delete / make unavailable	preserve / give access	I am not sure
digital photographs	22	176	31
personal digital files	51	137	41
personal audio and/or video files	51	137	41
e-books and/or audiobooks	91	87	51
social media accounts	124	49	56
email	88	95	46
communication apps	125	53	51
business communication accounts	114	69	46
cloud storage	110	63	56
Internet/mobile banking	91	90	48
online shopping accounts	153	24	52
fitness apps	162	21	46
business and networking accounts	158	23	48
academic platforms	152	29	48
entertainment and streaming accounts	147	37	45
travel accounts	153	30	46
transportation accounts	165	23	41
food and product delivery accounts	163	23	43
software licenses	139	45	45
dating apps	173	12	44
productivity tools	151	29	49

# Results

C. attitudes/opinions about digital legacy; actions and habits in practice

Table 2. Providing access to different types of personal digital files to potential heirs

DIGITAL CONTENT	yes	No	I do not care	I never thought about it
digital photographs	182	12	12	23
digital files	136	35	29	29
music files	94	46	62	27
video files	134	33	33	29
e-books	71	58	66	34
audiobooks	67	60	69	33
social media accounts	56	86	53	34
email	87	62	45	35



# Results: Digital legacy plan

Plans for preserving any of digital files and digital content in the event of their death,

- 95.2% answered NO
- 11 respondents (4.8%) answered YES

# Conclusions

- digital content and digital artifacts have become equally important for inheritance as the material possessions are
- respondents in our study give value to the content they create, but not all is worth saving for future heirs
- most of them don't have a digital legacy plan, but this study gave them enough information to start thinking and act towards building it
- although with certain limitations, this study gives valuable insights to the attitudes and opinions towards preservation of digital legacy among citizens in Croatia

# Thank you for your attention!

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